

A holiday brunch can ease the crunch

CHRISTMAS morning calls for something special to eat. A bowl of dry cereal just doesn't seem festive enough for the occasion. Your family and guests may be involved in opening gifts, and in most cases the kids are up much earlier than the older folks in the house. A holiday brunch is the perfect breakfast (or lunch) solution. Each person can eat when hunger strikes and the cook isn't stuck in the kitchen during all the festivities.

A bowl of fresh fruit makes a delicious and appealing centerpiece. Red apples, green grapes, oranges and slices of cheese provide nutritious nibbles, and exotic fruit such as a mango or kiwi will add a special touch for the occasion.

You can prepare most of the food in advance and keep it until Christmas morning. This means more time to spend with family and guests and less time at the stove.

Bake sweetrolls or coffee cake ahead of time and heat just before serving. Chop the cheese and other fillings for omelets and all you'll have to do is stir up the eggs and cook them.

For a tasty treat that will delight holiday appetites, here is a recipe for

Blueberry Coffee Cake, and some hints for making perfect omelets.

BLUEBERRY COFFEE CAKE

¼ cup EACH sliced almonds and firmly packed brown sugar
1½ cups all-purpose flour
¼ cup granulated sugar
1 Tbsp. baking powder
½ tsp. salt
¼ tsp. ground nutmeg
¼ cup butter or margarine
1 cup fresh blueberries
1 egg
½ cup milk
1 tsp. vanilla
Powdered sugar

Generously grease a 9-inch tube pan with a capacity of six to seven cups. Sprinkle with mixture of almonds and brown sugar; set aside.

In a bowl mix flour, granulated sugar, baking powder, salt and nutmeg; cut in butter until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Lightly stir in blueberries.

In a small bowl beat egg lightly with milk and vanilla. Stir milk mixture into blueberry mixture just until combined. Spread batter gently in prepared pan.

Bake in a 350 degree F oven until coffee cake is well browned and a long skewer inserted in the thickest part comes out clean (45 minutes to one hour).

Let stand in pan for about 5 minutes, loosen edges and invert onto a serving plate. Serve warm or at room temperature.

BASIC OMELETS

9 eggs
3 Tbsp. water
½ tsp. salt
Pinch EACH ground nutmeg and white pepper
3 to 4 Tbsp. butter or margarine

In a large bowl beat eggs with water, salt, nutmeg and pepper until well blended (about 30 seconds).

For each omelet heat about one tablespoon butter in a 8-inch omelet pan over medium-high heat until it begins to foam. Pour in one-third to one-fourth of egg mixture.

At first, slide pan back and forth to keep omelet from sticking. As the bottom begins to set, slip a thin spatula under eggs, tilting pan and lifting cooked portion to let uncooked egg mixture flow under it to the center. Repeat until most of the omelet is set, but center and top are still

moist and creamy.

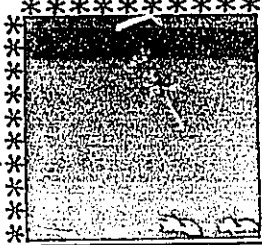
For a filled omelet, spoon filling across center, in line with handle. Have a warm serving plate ready. Loosen one side of the omelet with spatula and fold over about a third over the remainder. Then hold pan over serving plate so the other side begins to slide out. Flip omelet so previously folded side folds over, producing an omelet folded into thirds with center third on top.

Makes three or four individual omelets.

Omelet-making is so quick that one cook can serve several people in just a few minutes. If you have guests who enjoy cooking, and your kitchen is large enough, why not let each person cook his or her own?


Fillings for omelets range from basic cheese to more elaborate fillings such as mushrooms and sliced olives, shrimp or crabmeat, spinach and cheddar cheese — the varieties are unlimited.


Add a few pots of fresh coffee, herbal cinnamon tea, hot chocolate, apple cider with cinnamon sticks (delicious hot) and your home will be filled with delicious aromas, good food and satisfied tummies.


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